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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6898
INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0740
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4290
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7831
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5391
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1262
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1190
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001148

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DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: BURMA: THE DIALOGUE IS DEAD

REF: A. RANGOON 48
[1](#)B. RANGOON 1119

RANGOON 00001148 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: PM Thein Sein told an Embassy contact that Than Shwe had dispatched him to ASEAN with two objectives: to cancel Gambari's briefing during the Summit, and to undermine support for U.S. sanctions on Burma. Thein Sein said Than Shwe had ordered him to walk out of the Summit if ASEAN leaders refused to cancel Gambari's briefing. Thein Sein also revealed that the Senior General is singularly focused on removing U.S. sanctions and has no plans to engage in a genuine dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi. Our contact believes Than Shwe feels the pressure of U.S. sanctions and recommends we exploit emerging differences within the top levels of the regime by tightening the sanctions against Than Shwe and other senior generals. Gambari has no visa for a follow-up visit to Burma, reportedly due to regime pique at him for issuing Aung San Suu Kyi's statement, about which they claim Gambari failed to inform them in advance. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Embassy contact Phone Win, who has close ties to high-level members of Burma's military regime (Ref A), told pol/econ chief that he had met Prime Minister Thein Sein during his stopover in Myiek, en route to the ASEAN Summit in Singapore. According to Phone Win, the PM was supposed to depart Myiek after only a brief stop, but decided to spend the night because he had heard reports of anti-Burma demonstrations in Singapore. During his stopover, Thein Sein told Phone Win that Than Shwe had dispatched him to ASEAN with two objectives: to cancel Gambari's briefing during the Summit, and to undermine support for U.S. Sanctions on Burma. Thein Sein said Than Shwe had ordered him to walk out of the Summit if ASEAN leaders refused to cancel Gambari's briefing. Note: reporting in other channels corroborates this account, end note. Thein Sein said Than Shwe is singularly focused on U.S. sanctions, and is well aware of how difficult they would be to lift. Nor does Than Shwe have any plans to engage in a genuine dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi.

13. (C) Phone Win pronounced the dialogue "dead." He said that many of the regional commanders he knows, as well as lower-level military officials, were pleased with the content of Aung San Suu Kyi's statement that Gambari released on her behalf. However, as soon as Than Shwe dispatched his hard-line Minister of Culture to demand the ethnic cease-fire groups disavow Aung San Suu Kyi as their representative (Ref B), they realized Than Shwe had no intention of engaging in a serious dialogue with the opposition. Phone Win considers Than Shwe and Maung Aye to be a lost cause, but he sees growing daylight between the top two leaders and the regime's second tier commanders. According to Phone Win's military contacts, both Than Shwe and Maung Aye gave the orders to crackdown on the monks, including shooting them if necessary. Number three General Thura Shwe Man personally opposed the order, but carried it out, quietly advising regional commanders to do so with minimal bloodshed.

14. (C) Phone Win told us that Than Shwe felt the pressure of U.S. sanctions and recommended the U.S. exploit the emerging differences within the top levels of the regime by tightening our sanctions against the senior generals. Than Shwe has done nothing to reward, he stated. Phone Win also urged us to continue vocally advocating the need for any upcoming referendums or elections to be free and fair.

15. (C) In a separate conversation with the Charge d'Affaires, outgoing UN Resident Coordinator Charles Petrie said the regime has not been cooperative in arranging Gambari's next visit, and has yet to issue him another visa. The generals now complain that Gambari had not informed them in advance that he would be issuing a statement on behalf of Aung San Suu Kyi, even though Gambari had informed GOB officials of this intention at meetings during his last visit to Burma. For this reason, Gambari had accepted the tight restrictions on his schedule. Without the statement, Gambari

RANGOON 00001148 002.2 OF 002

understood he would have failed, according to Petrie.

16. (U) Arrests in Rangoon continue, two 88 Generation Students members, Myat Sann and Win Maw, were reportedly arrested yesterday evening. Both were trying to rebuild the leadership of 88 Generation since its main leaders were arrested last August. We also confirmed reports that the few monks remaining at Maggin Monastery were ordered to leave and that the facility would be sealed. Before the crackdown, Maggin Monastery had sheltered Phyu Phyu Thinn's homeless HIV/AIDS patients. The monastery has a reputation for being a gathering point for the pro-democracy opposition.

17. (C) Comment: Within the next few months it will become clear that Than Shwe's "dialogue" is a farce. He will string the UN along by allowing Aung San Suu Kyi to meet with his powerless Minister of Relations and Gambari, and point to this empty process as a concession worthy of reward. Clearly our sanctions grate but Than Shwe does not seem to realize that smoke and mirrors will not suffice to make them go away. The rest of the international community will shortly realize that the long hoped for dialogue is going nowhere: Aung San Suu Kyi is still held incommunicado; arrests are continuing; and Gambari is not as welcome as he claimed earlier this month.

18. (C) Pinheiro's report on December 11 will likely reinforce the conclusion that the regime remains resistant to dialogue. We might use that opportunity to announce new sanctions targeting Than Shwe, Maung Aye, and their crony financiers. At that time we should state categorically that the sanctions will not be lifted until we see concrete progress towards national reconciliation, citing specific objectives such as all political prisoners free; restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly lifted; and a broadly representative group of Burmese discussing the way forward that will lead to a free and fair referendum and elections.

19. (C) Than Shwe has a clearly reasonable way out working with the UN. However, should he continue to defy the UN's good offices, his few defenders will at least distance themselves from him, which may increase the odds that less hard-line members of the military decide it is finally time for him to go. End comment.

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